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FOR RELEASE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

In what form, at what age, and under what conditions does the problem of stuttering arise? Some answers to these questions are available in a new book, "The Onset of Stuttering," by Wendell J. Johnson and associates, published by the University of Minnesota Press.

Dr. Richard M. Boehmler of the Montana State University Speech and Hearing Clinic is one of Dr. Johnson's associates who contributed to the work reported in the book. The book is based on three studies carried on by the speech pathology center at the State University of Iowa, Iowa City, where Dr. Johnson is a professor of speech pathology and psychology.

In investigations continuing from 1934 to 1957, approximately 500 children and their parents were studied, Dr. Boehmler said. Half of the children were classified as stutterers.

The mothers and fathers were interviewed about the beginnings of the problem of stuttering and related physical, medical, emotional, socioeconomic, and educational aspects of family life and child development. The parents of stutterers were compared with the parents of nonstutterers on the basis of their response to the interview questions and their scores on a psychological test.

Dr. Boehmler says the findings led to the conclusion that most children who come to be regarded as stutterers are essentially normal physically and deviate emotionally primarily in the area of communications. Findings from follow-up studies indicate that stuttering treated in early childhood, mainly through counseling of parents, can be arrested and eliminated in most cases.

(more)

One of the important differences observed between the stutters and nonstutterers was in parental attitudes and practices that affected the children, according to the book. It was found that the parents of stutterers were more demanding regarding the fluency of their children's speech, were more dissatisfied with their children and each other, had higher standards of child development, and seemed to think, feel, and behave in ways calculated to make for tension in the home. In other words, Dr. Boehmler pointed out, the listener is often more responsible for the development of stuttering than the speaker.

Dr. Boehmler worked for about two years, from 1953 to 1954, on the research project reported in "The Onset of Stuttering." He served as work supervisor for Study III, did a number of the interviews, collected and analyzed a large proportion of the children's speech samples, carried out much of the standard processing of the data, and prepared a preliminary draft of certain parts of chapters one, three, four, five, six, and eight of the book.

His research on the problem was done under a grant from the Louis W. and Maud Hill Family Foundation of St. Paul, Minn. He joined the MSU speech faculty in the fall of 1958.

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